

Presented by HENRY IRVING

At DRURY LANE THEATRE

DANTE

A DRAMA by V. SARDOU
and
E. MOREAU

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Some Explanatory Notes by an
Italian Student

LONDON

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Hugh Anson-Cartwright

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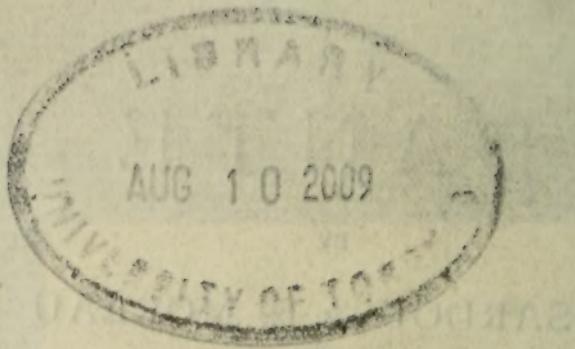
ITALIAN STUDENT



LONDON

GEORGE BELL AND SONS

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THIAGO MALIATI

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A NOTE ON THE STORY

THE play opens some ten years after the death of Beatrice, the object of Dante's first love, immortalized by him in his works, and it is on the following events, partly invented by the dramatists, partly historical, that the authors have founded the story of their play.

Among the girl friends of Beatrice was one Pia dei Tolomei, who has been forced into a loveless marriage with Nello della Pietra, a depraved and ferocious Florentine magnate. The unhappy young wife has, through her intimacy with Beatrice, become acquainted with Dante, and, at the death of Beatrice, the mutual bereavement of the two has gradually developed into an ardent mutual love. . . . During Nello's absence on affairs of state, a child, Gemma, has been born to Pia and Dante. To save his sister's reputation, Pia's brother Ettore has adopted Gemma, allowing her to pass as his own daughter. . . . Years elapse; Dante's life of exile preventing

him from seeing either the mother or the child. Ettore, the brother of Pia, dies, leaving his ostensible daughter to the charge of Francesca di Rimini, the wife of the misshapen Malatesta, and a close friend of Pia. At this point, Sardou and Moreau have interwoven the murder of Francesca by Malatesta with that of Pia by Nello, for Nello's suspicions have been aroused, and after condemning Pia to a lingering death in the marshes, he, through an unguarded ejaculation of Dante's, who has risked his life by returning to Florence, discovers the true relationship of Gemma to Dante and Pia.

The remainder of the play is taken up with Nello's efforts to wreak his vengeance upon Gemma, which are frustrated by Dante, who, finally, with the aid of the supernatural knowledge gained in his vision of the journey through Hell, rescues Gemma from the Inquisition, into whose clutches she had fallen. This scene clearly indicates the intention of the French authors to symbolize in "Dante" the higher moral spirit of modern times, which eventually triumphed over the bigotry and ruthlessness of the Middle Ages.

SYNOPSIS OF DANTE'S LIFE.

WE know but little with certainty of Dante's life ; his biography is almost entirely lost to us. The great poet and father of Italian literature was born in Florence in May, 1265, of the Alighieri family. Left an orphan while still a child, he began his serious studies under the guidance of Brunetto Latini. At the age of nine he fell in love with Beatrice, and so continued till her death, sixteen years later (June, 1290). That love made him a poet. He exalted and lamented her in his minor poems, and glorified her later in the Divine Comedy, where Beatrice symbolizes Divine Revelation. One year after her death Dante made love to another lady, whose identity is very doubtful. Some think she was Gemma Donati, whom the poet married about 1295, and by whom he had several children. Early in his life Dante took an interest in public affairs, and fought at Campaldino (11th June, 1289) with the Guelfs against the Ghibellines. As the Florentine constitution

made membership of one of the *Arts* or Trade Guilds a condition for holding office, Dante, at thirty, enrolled himself in the Guild of the Physicians and the Apothecaries.

From that age he served the Republic in various capacities until 1300, when he reached the highest office, becoming one of the Priors of the Republic for two months (15th June-15th August). The priorship proved the source of all his misfortunes. When the party of the Whites, to whom Dante belonged, fell and the opposite faction of the Blacks obtained the control of Florence, the poet, under a false charge of corruption, and for party spite, was banished from his native and beloved city, from which he was to be for ever excluded (27th January, 1302).

It is difficult to trace his steps in exile. He visited almost every Court in Italy, and went also to Paris, leading a life of dignified poverty, a life of woe and wandering, supporting himself with the little he earned by teaching. In 1310 the descent into Italy of the Emperor Henry VII. of Luxembourg revived Dante's hopes, not only of a possible return to Florence, but also of the realization of his political creed—a universal Roman Empire. These hopes, however, were doomed to disappointment, through the sudden death of the Emperor, and from that time he

dedicated his life to study and to the "sacred poem to which both heaven and earth had set their hands so that it made *him* lean through many a year."

His last refuge was Ravenna, where, being the guest of Guido Novello da Polenta, nephew of that fair sinner, Francesca da Rimini, he died on the night of the 13th of September, 1321.

THE SYMBOLICAL CONCEPTION OF SARDOU AND MOREAU'S "DANTE."

THOUGH it may be possible to summarize the life of Dante it is not possible to deal in the same manner with the spiritual content of his "mystic unfathomable song." His life was that of a wandering exile and sorrow-stricken man, but his spiritual teaching is the precious heritage of every age and of every people, and reaches the most sublime heights of imagination.

"Dante" said Carlyle "speaks to the noble, the pure and great in all times and ages. He burns as a pure star, fixed there in the firmament, at which the great and the high of all ages kindle themselves ; he is the possession of all the chosen of the world for uncounted time."

It is this conception of the hero-poet, and not the vicissitudes of his life, that inspired MM. Sardou and Moreau. And the playgoer should bear in mind that such is the nature of their drama in order to appreciate it at its true worth. The authors did not intend to write an historic drama: the persons and scenes which follow each other on the stage have only a relative value; they serve but to give light and relief to the figure of the chief actor and to interpret his feelings and his thoughts. To a certain extent Sardou and Moreau's drama is as symbolic of the Florentine poet as the poem. Sardou has explained it in an interview. "There is more" he said "of the soul than of the body of Dante in our drama. We have personified in him a lover of liberty, a fierce hater of persecution, of oppression and of clerical domination. . . . Our Dante is not the historical Dante; it is the moral Dante. . . . We have taken him in his full grandeur as a symbol of liberty. It was this conception of the hero that we offered to Henry Irving. . . . Politics pass away, accessories fade: what moves us is the dominant idea of the poet, his attitude of revolt against the injustice of men. In him, through the mist of the Middle Ages, we see a modern light shining. . . ."

Yet the difficulty lay precisely in translating a symbol into action. It was necessary to find the

means of casting into dramatic form the exclusively intellectual and ideal Dante. And that is why Sardou and Moreau have associated his personality with the most famous and popular episodes of his poem. The idea is a most happy one. All great artists are traditionally more or less identified with the creations of their art. Name Dante, and you will think at once of his immortal creations, of Ugolino, of Francesca, of Pia de' Tolomei, even as Shakespeare is intimately associated in everybody's mind with the most striking characters of *his* tragedies.

THE CENTRAL EPISODE OF THE DRAMA.

ALL the biographers of Dante divide his life into three periods. The first period, from his birth to the death of Beatrice (1265-1290), which was the innocent period of his pure and ideal love; the second period, from the death of Beatrice to the death of the Emperor Henry VII. of Luxembourg (1290-1313), which was the period of his internal struggles and violent passions; and lastly the third (1313-1321), which was the period of his great moral elevation and of the redemption of his soul.

The Dante of the first period does not appear on the stage, though hints of him will be noticed here and there. But the more interesting Dante of the second and third period is clearly mirrored in the play, so that we recognize him as we see him in Sardou and Moreau's drama, first struggling with men and passions, quick to love and to hate, full of indignation at the evils which flourish round him and for which he has no remedy; then, after having been brought to the verge of despair, finding again his faith and his strength in the vision of the after life, and lastly, standing in the fourth act wholly purified, as it were, the personification of Justice.

The central episode of the drama is the love of Dante for Pia de' Tolomei. We know, by the confession of Dante himself in various parts of his works, that a year after the death of Beatrice he fell in love with a *donna gentile* (gentle lady), who had shown him great sympathy at the time of his bereavement. We know, too, by the poet's confession, and by the admission of all his biographers, that this second love was not a *mere boy's freak* (as Ostasio rightly says in the first scene of the drama, referring to Beatrice), but a real and ardent love, which later on he was somewhat ashamed of.

Who this gentle lady—a friend of Beatrice

who in Purgatory . . . reproaches Dante for his infidelity—may have been, it is difficult to state, though some believe she was Gemma Donati, who afterwards became Dante's wife. However, Sardou and Moreau's identification of Pia de' Tolomei with the *donna gentile* rests on a play upon words. As a matter of fact in Canzone IX¹ of the "Canzoniere" Dante refers to a *bella pietra* (beautiful rock), and the authors thought to find an allusion to the wife of Nello della *Pietra* in this word *pietra* (rock), which occurs not only in that particular canzone but in several sonnets and sestines of the "Canzoniere," and gave no little trouble to the commentators, who could never agree as to whether Dante referred here to a real woman (some thought, always by playing upon words, to Madonna *Pietra* degli Scrovigni), or merely to a philosophical abstraction. Gemma, the daughter, is a character entirely created by the imagination of the dramatists, who, nevertheless, are not alone in giving an illegitimate child to Dante, for certain critics, rightly or wrongly, have cast doubts on the legitimacy of Dante's daughter, Beatrice, who took the veil in the nunnery of Saint Stephen in Ravenna. The authors have represented her as being betrothed

¹ "Fain in my speech would I be harsh and rough,
As in all her acts that rock so fair."

to Bernardino da Polenta, nephew of Francesca's father, the good Count Guido, who did actually fight by Dante's side at the battle of Campaldino. The relations of Gemma with Francesca, and her sojourn in the house of the Malatesta, her forced retirement to the Convent of S. Chiara at Volterra, and all that happened there; the flight of the two lovers and their imprisonment at Avignon have, as the playgoer will easily understand, no historical basis, neither *per se* nor in relation to Dante. But this central episode of Pia, and their child Gemma, has served to maintain a dramatic continuity in the construction of the play, and to knit together scenes and historic incidents otherwise unrelated.

PROLOGUE.

THE EPISODE OF COUNT UGOLINO.

THE episode of Count Ugolino is a typical one in the history of the internal disturbances which distracted mediæval Italy. Ugolino, of the noble and powerful family Gherardeschi, Count of Donaratico, lord of several castles in the Maremma, was a most ambitious man, who all his life strove

to become master of Pisa, his native town. To gain his ends he spared neither intrigues, violence, or treachery ; as it is said in the prologue—he even warred with the Genoese against his own country. He was the leader of the Guelf party, and as such, found himself an opponent of the Archbishop Ruggieri, who favoured the Ghibellines. Little is known of Archbishop Ruggieri, not even his family name, though he seems to have come from the Ubaldini of Mugello. He was therefore not a Pisan, but was elected Archbishop of Pisa in the year 1278. Ruggieri was very ambitious and anxious to exercise supreme control over the city. In 1288 he entered into a secret compact with Ugolino, promising to share the power with him, which, according to the constitution, was to be in the hands of two magistrates. On the 30th of June, Ugolino, who was campaigning outside Pisa, returned with a few followers, but the Archbishop, failing to keep his promise, contrived to be elected sole Podesta and Captain of the People, and, in order to get rid of Ugolino, raised the populace against him, accusing the Count of meditating fresh treasons. Ugolino shut himself up in the Palace of the People, and with a few relatives and friends opposed a stubborn resistance to the furious assailants. Then the Archbishop ordered the gates

to be set on fire, so that the Pisans were able to force an entrance and capture Ugolino. He with his two sons, Gaddo and Uguccione, and his two nephews, Brigata and Anselmuccio, was flung in the Guadalandi Tower, kept there for nine months, and at last starved to death in March, 1289. The ill-famed Guadalandi Tower *at the seven streets* in the Place of the Anziani, had after him the name of the Tower of Hunger, and was standing as late as 1655.

Thus far history.

The story that the Pisans were infuriated against him because in time of famine he refused to abolish certain duties, and thus inflicted great misery on the city, is probably a legend. But this legend was current in Italy some time after the catastrophe, perhaps to explain and partly to justify the infamous conduct of the Pisans, who starved Ugolino because he previously had starved them. Sardou and Moreau, however, when representing Ugolino in his last moments, adhered to this legend for dramatic reasons.

Helen, the unhappy mother and wife whom we see on the stage imploring the liberation of her dear ones, is an historic, not an imaginary personage. We know, in fact, that one of the sons of Ugolino, Guelfo, married Princess Helen, daughter of Enzo King of Sardinia, thus becoming related

to the house of Swabia, to which the Gherardeschi were subsequently always loyal. The other persons of the Prologue are all imaginary. Nello della Pietra and Malatesta are historic, but the rôle which is here attributed to them is quite fanciful. The name of Nello appears in the chronicles of the time as having taken part in the struggles between Florentines and Pisans. As for Dante, he may have known Ugolino personally, when the latter went to Florence in 1285; he certainly heard in detail the whole of his history from Ugolino's nephew, Nino Visconti, who was Dante's friend. And in Canto XXXIII of Hell, containing the famous episode of Count Ugolino, the poet, though placing him among the traitors, shows great pity for his fate, and paints the Archbishop Ruggieri and the Pisans in the darkest colours. The last words which Dante utters in this scene were suggested by the well-known invective :

“ Ah, Pisa, scandal to the people of the beauteous land where ‘ si ’ is heard. . . . ”

Besides the generous manner in which the dramatists treat Dante in the whole of the Prologue, his sudden indignation at the infamous torture of Ugolino and of his innocent sons and nephews; his wrath against the populace and

the Archbishop exactly correspond to the moral character and feelings of the poet. In a time when the destruction of a fellow being, by whatever means and for whatever reason, was lightly esteemed, Dante was perhaps the first to feel and profess the respect for human life in the same sense in which we moderns feel and profess it. And this is fitly shown also by the little story Dante narrates to Pia of the new-born child he rescued from the font in Anagni. What was sacrilege to the mediæval mind, was to him a sacred duty, precisely as it is to the developed moral conscience of the man of the twentieth century.¹

ACT I.

THE SPRINGTIDE FETE. THE FRIENDS OF DANTE. THE EPISODE OF FRANCESCA.

AFTER the Prologue, the first act opens gaily with the songs and roundels of May, and affords a true picture of the graceful costumes of fourteenth-century Florence. The whole life of Italy awaking and emerging from the deathly darkness and the unæsthetic terror of the Middle

¹ See *Inferno*, Canto XIX. 19-21.

Ages, was one universal song to light, beauty and joy.

But in no other city did that joyous song find more fascinating expression than in Florence. There Boccaccio and Sacchetti revealed in their stories the full, real and jocund sense of the new life ; there painters, sculptors, architects and musicians evoked the love of the beautiful, and raised it by their arts to the highest standard ; there the people indulged in all kinds of bright festivities and artistic revels. All was genial, natural, spontaneous. Even now the custom of hymning May, and celebrating the springtide in quaint charming fashion is common in the green valleys of Tuscany.

Almost all the chief characters of this act are historic persons—Casella, Belacqua, Forese, Giotto, were Dante's friends. Casella (of Florence or Pistoia) was an exceedingly clever composer, and a personal friend of the poet, some of whose verses he is said to have set to music. Therefore, very appositely, he is made on the stage to sing one of Dante's poems. The little incident is not entirely of Sardou and Moreau's invention, and it must have been suggested to them by the pretty story of Sacchetti, in which Dante reproaches and beats the ass-driver for wrongly reciting his verses.

Belacqua was a maker of musical instruments, notorious for his sloth.

Forese (Donati) who bore the nickname of Bicci Novello, and died in 1296, was Dante's kinsman and a poet; a poetical correspondence between the two is still extant.

Giotto, the great painter—about whom no explanatory note is needed—is said, though eleven years younger, to have been a friend of Dante; and the well-known Bargello portrait of the poet is questionably attributed to him. Also the episode of Paolo and Francesca, which recently two modern poets, Stephen Phillips and Gabriele D'Annunzio, placed on the stage, is a popular one.

Francesca was daughter of Guido Vecchio da Polenta, but the year of her birth is unknown. About 1275 she was, for political reasons, married to Lanciotto Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, who was said to be ugly and lame, but very clever. These are the bald historical facts, to which legend early began to add romantic details, tampering not only with the dates of the events and the ages of the two persons concerned, but with the actual facts. It was said that Francesca was duped, that, thinking to marry Paolo, on the morning after the wedding she found herself the wife of Lanciotto. A most improbable version,

Paolo having already been married in 1269 to Orabile Beatrice of Ghiaggiuolo, who bore him two children. Paolo, born about the year 1250, was a handsome and accomplished gentleman, but inactive and dreamy. He was elected by the Florentines Captain of the People in 1282, but resigned the following year.

The date, place, and circumstances of the tragic death of the two lovers have been altered by the authors, as we know that Paolo and Francesca were stabbed by Lanciotto between 1285 and 1289, not later, probably in September, 1289.

There is no indication that Dante was ever personally acquainted with Francesca, though having been in friendly relation with the Polenta family, he must have intimately known the sad story of the unhappy woman. Dante reappears in this first act after many years of exile. He knows already "how salt doth taste another's bread, and how hard the path to descend and mount upon another's stair." His soul is embittered by the scenes of violence and avarice he witnessed in Italy and France. The date of Dante's visit to Paris is unknown, and he may have really seen also something of the terrible persecution of the Knights Templars, to which he indignantly alludes in Purgatory, c. xx. 91.

These Templars, as the reader is aware, at once knights and monks, formed the most famous military order of the Middle Ages, and were persecuted and destroyed at the beginning of the fourteenth century by Philip the Fair, King of France, prompted by the desire to obtain their treasure. Their Grand Master, Jacques Molay, was first tortured, then slowly roasted to death on the Isle des Juifs, in the Seine, March 19th, 1314. A strange tradition asserts that from the stake he summoned the Pope to meet him within a month, the King within a year, at the bar of Almighty God, and history tells us that it happened as he had foretold.

ACT II.

THE EPISODE OF PIA DE' TOLOMEI.

THE reader of the Divine Comedy will remember that, while scaling the mountain of Purgatory, Dante and Virgil meet the shades of the late repentant who were violently slain. Among them Pia, who rehearses in brief pathetic words the tragedy of her wedded life, and implores the

poet, when he is rested from his long journey, to bethink him of her :

“ Pray, when thou shalt return to the world and art rested from thy long journey Remember me, who am La Pia : Siena made me, Maremma unmade me : ‘tis known to him who, first plighting troth, had wedded me with his gem.”¹

This gentle vision of a lady, invested with such melancholy pathos, in the few lines of Dante, this gracious, mysterious figure tempted the imagination of artists in every age ; painters have wrought pictures of her, novelists have written romances, and an Italian musician has composed an opera on the subject. Sardou and Moreau have now made her the heroine of their drama. But, in the dearth of facts, all have necessarily used their imaginations in weaving her story.

Pia belonged to the Sienese family of the Tolomei, and married Nello d’Inghiramo dei Pannocchieschi (Podesta of Volterra in 1277, and of Lucca in 1314; Captain of the Tuscan Guelfs in 1284; still living in 1322). She was put to death by her husband in 1295 at a castle in the Sienese Maremma. Some say she was thrown out of the window by Nello’s orders, and

¹ “The Purgatory of Dante Alighieri,” translated by Th. Okey. Published by T. M. Dent and Co.

the people still point to a ravine under the castle called “The Leap of the Countess”; others, that she died in some mysterious way (which probably gave rise to the tradition that the unhealthy marshes of the district were intended to, and actually did, kill her). Nello’s motives are variously given: according to some accounts he was jealous (with or without cause); according to others he wished to get rid of his wife in order to be able to marry the Countess Margherita degli Aldobrandeschi, the widow of Guy of Monfort.

It is not improbable that Dante was personally acquainted with Nello della Pietra, as the latter had much to do with the Florentines in the last decade of the fourteenth century.

ACT III.

HELL.

THE Divine Comedy, the poem which made Dante immortal, is the story of an allegorical journey of the poet through the three kingdoms of Damnation, Purification and Blessedness. The protagonist is the poet himself, who, escaping

the terrors and perils of a dark wood, which he had entered sunk in sleep, having lost the straight way, undertakes the journey, first downwards descending, through the various infernal circles, to the centre of earth, then upwards ascending from the centre of earth to its surface, and then again upwards along the terraces of the Mount of Purification to the heights of the Earthly Paradise, from which he lastly ascends through nine heavens to the Empyrean, where the journey ends in the beatific vision of the Divinity.

Along this journey, described in the three canticle, Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso, the poet sees the various eternal and temporal pains as well as the various degrees of beatitude ; he discourses now with Virgil, who teaches him what can be known by human reason ; now with Beatrice, who reveals to him the mysteries of religion and faith ; now with several spirits of the three kingdoms, who discuss with him of philosophical and theological matters, tell him stories of themselves and their families, friends and enemies, etc., and sometimes foretell to the poet his future life and the fate of his fatherland. This vision, whose ideal date is 1300, the year of the famous jubilee, is of course an allegory which has a twofold aspect, political and theological ; wherefore the Divine Comedy is

considered both as the great epic of the Redemption of the Sinner, and the great epic of the Moral and Civil regeneration of the peoples, particularly of Italy.

Dante imagines his vision to have been seen in a critical moment of his life, when tired of the experiences of the world and of his own existence, ashamed of his errors, he realized, after a long and bitter internal struggle, that the only aim for men should be "to love the Good beyond which is nought that may be aspired to." He then gave effect to the purpose, many times made and as many times forsaken, of entering again the straight way he had abandoned after Beatrice's death, turning his back to the wild, rough, stubborn wood and "ascending the delectable mountain, which is the beginning and the cause of all gladness." These feelings are expressed by Sardou and Moreau in Scene 1 of Act III. Dante, at this point of the drama, is in great despair and wishes to die (a wish to which he actually gave expression in one of the minor poems, "Gli occhi dolenti" etc., "Vita Nuova," c. 22); but Beatrice appears and bids him, "Judge nought by what thou seest here below: the law of God, His wrath and justice, are only known unto the spirit which has tasted death."

And here the drama introduces with great skill a fragment of the first part of the vision. It is only a fragment, for it would have been beyond all possibilities of the stage to dramatize, even briefly, the whole poem. Still, we can see here, though not in the same order as in the Divine Comedy, its most familiar scenes and episodes ; the terrible portal of Hell with its famous words, " Abandon all hope ye who enter here " ; Charon, the ferryman of the dead, with his barque, the City of Dis, and some classes of sinners : the robbers and usurers, the misers, the hypocrites, the judges that sold justice, those that besmirched the sacred trust of empire, primacy and kingship, tyrants and conquerors, traitors (among them Ugolino and the Archbishop Ruggieri), guilty lovers, and among them Paolo and Francesca. In the scene of the fiery graves Sardou and Moreau have introduced, for the purpose of drawing together the threads of the drama, some spirits which are not to be found in Dante. But the scene is meant to correspond to that of Canto XIX of Hell, where Pope Nicholas III. is awaiting Boniface VIII. At the end of the act we have a glimpse of Purgatory with its calmness, opposed to the awful turmoil of Hell, with its green meadows and flowers. And after the sweet appearance of *Pia de' Tolomei*,

Dante utters, in conclusion, the words: "And Thou, supreme in mercy as in justice, whom in that woeful hour I did blaspheme; who from Thy throne on High beyond the clouds, readest my penitence, aid me, O God, vouchsafe to me Thy guidance!" words which admirably summarize the symbolical meaning of the whole poem: how the sinful man, aided by human reason (Virgil) and by divine revelation (Beatrice), abandons sin, does penance, and rises little by little to the contemplation and fruition of the Supreme Good!

ACT IV.

THE LEGATE—AVIGNON.

IN the last act, without introducing historic persons or historic events, the dramatists have aimed at reproducing the historic atmosphere of that deplorable period of the Papacy which is known as the period of the Babylonish Captivity (1309-1377). After the bitter feud between Boniface VIII. and Philip the Fair, King of France, in which the Pope tried to assert his supreme power alike in temporal and spiritual affairs, and the King, dis-

regarding the papal bulls and briefs, and even a sentence of excommunication, made him prisoner in Anagni, the papal see was transferred from Rome to Avignon by Clement V., a *protégé* of King Philip. The Babylonish Captivity represents the epoch of the greatest papal corruption and is the object of one of the fiercest invectives of Dante (Purgatory, c. XXXII) and of some powerful and vehement sonnets of Petrarcha. Clement V., and the other five Popes who resided in Avignon, surrounded themselves with jesters and minstrels, and indulged in all kinds of profane enjoyments. Clement V. was so little respected and loved, on account of his immorality, that when he died (20th April, 1314), his body was not even watched, and was partly burnt through by a wax candle which fell on the bier.

It was at the time of Clement VI. that the famous Love's Courts blossomed in the papal palace of Avignon. Yet to this licentious and loose life the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition was a severe and bitter contrast. Vested in the Dominican Order, and under the full control of the Popes, this tribunal, though instituted in 1248, began in the following century to develop its terrible activity in discovering, repressing and punishing heresy.

The papal palace in Avignon was a magnificent edifice, with deep walls and high towers, standing on a rock commanding a large and beautiful view. It was fortified, and safer than any other fortress in the Middle Ages. Its exterior had a dismal aspect, but the interior, with ample staircases of white marble and gilded chambers, was most bright and splendid. The palace, though dilapidated, is still standing to-day, and is one of the chief attractions to the visitors of Avignon.

George Vasari, the well-known biographer of the Italian painters, affirms that Giotto was summoned to Avignon by Clement V., to paint some frescoes ; but the statement is perhaps incorrect. What we know with certainty is, that the frescoes of the palace (which was built after the death of Clement V., by Pope John XXII.), were the work of three Italian artists, Simone Memmi, Giovanello da Viterbo, and Spinello Aretino. As to Dante, we do not know which cities he visited, beside Paris, in his travels through France : his appearance, however, in Avignon has a merely symbolical meaning in the drama.

He acts and speaks here not like a man, but like a prophet ; the Cardinal Legate falls at his feet almost crushed by a superior force : Casella

and Giotto, awe-stricken, look at him, but hardly recognize him. He is no more the same Dante, stirred by the passions of his time, and his own temperament, whom we have seen in the Prologue, and in the first two acts: nor is he any longer the disappointed Dante, broken down in despair, imploring eternal rest over the grave of Beatrice. He is the new man, purged of his faults, freed of his passions, firm in his faith: the man who knows, believes, loves and acts accordingly. He can say now to the Cardinal Legate: "No man escapes God's justice!" because he stands there, as in his Poem, purified, enlightened, moved by God, as it were the great avenging spirit of his age!

